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AUTHOR	Bouleris, Sue; Collett, De Ette; Mauntler, Mike; Ray, Shirley
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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the importance of a school's having procedures in place to deal with possible biological terrorist threats. It begins with a discussion of biological terrorism. It then provides the symptoms of anthrax, treatment options for anthrax, and precautions to take when suspicious of an attack with a hazardous material. The paper goes on to describe a case study in which a high school student placed packets of baking powder in the lockers of other students who had taunted and bullied him. The baking powder was suspected to be a hazardous material, which caused a crisis situation in the school. The paper concludes by stating the school culture must reflect a daily consciousness and preparedness for extreme circumstances. By preparing for the unexpected crisis and providing routine practice of potential crisis scenarios, students and staff will develop confidence in their ability to respond appropriately and effectively in a crisis situation. (Contains 19 references and a flow chart illustrating procedures to be followed when the presence of hazardous materials creates a crisis in a school.) (WFA)

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School Crisis Management Case Study

McCormick's Mayhem: "The time to learn to dance is not five minutes before the party"

May 31, 2003

Sue Bouleris, Behavior Specialist, Pinellas County Schools

De Ette Collett, IMPACT Teacher, Hillsborough County Schools

Mike Mauntler, Educational Projects Specialist, Mote Marine Lab Sarasota

Shirley Ray, Elementary Teacher, Pasco County Schools

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Biological Terrorism

"Bioterrorism is the intentional use of microorganisms or toxins derived from living organisms to cause death or disease in humans, animals, or plants on which we depend" (Emerging Infectious Disease, 2003).

Prior to the 2001 Postal Service incident with bacillus anthracis there had only been three reported outbreaks in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control investigated 1,099 outbreaks of suspected bioterrorism in the United States during the years 1988-1999.

Anthrax: Symptoms and Treatment Options

Anthrax is an infectious disease caused by the bacteria Bacillus anthracis. There are three forms of the disease based on the method of infection.

The form the authorities are most concerned with is inhalation anthrax. Inhalation anthrax is contracted when the spores of the bacteria are inhaled and begin rapid growth. The symptoms may begin as quickly as a few days or up to seven weeks after infection. Common early symptoms include flu like symptoms or upper respiratory infection symptoms. If left untreated, it is usually fatal.

Skin anthrax is the most common form of the disease. The disease is contracted by contact with infected animals or animal products. A small sore blisters and becomes an ulcer with a black scab within a few days.

Gastrointestinal anthrax is usually contracted by eating undercooked contaminated meat. Mortality rates run from 25 to 60 percent.

The federal government has the Nation Pharmaceutical Stockpile (NPS). This consists of stockpiled antibiotics and medications, which can be moved to a designated area within twelve

hours. The government has also made arrangements with pharmaceutical businesses to mass-produce antibiotics on an as needed basis. Cipro (ciprofloxacin) is the drug of choice.

Anthrax Precautions

As the nation experienced a little over a year ago, anthrax is a form of biological terrorism. To refresh your memory, some things which ought to trigger suspicion, include parcels that—

- Are unexpected or from someone unfamiliar to you.
- Have no return address, or have one that can't be verified as legitimate.
- Are marked with restrictive endorsements, such as "Personal," "Confidential" or "Do not x-ray."
- Have protruding wires or aluminum foil, strange odors or stains.
- Show a city or state in the postmark that doesn't match the return address.
- Are of unusual weight, given their size, or are lopsided or oddly shaped.
- Are marked with any threatening language.
- Have inappropriate or unusual labeling.
- Have excessive postage or excessive packaging material such as masking tape and string.
- Have misspellings of common words.
- Are addressed to someone no longer with your organization or are otherwise outdated.
- Have incorrect titles or title without a name.
- Are not addressed to a specific person.
- Have handwritten or poorly typed addresses.

With suspicious envelopes and packages other than those that might contain explosives, take these additional steps against possible biological and chemical agents.

- Refrain from eating or drinking in a designated mail handling area.
- Place suspicious envelopes or packages in a plastic bag or some other type of container to prevent leakage of contents. Never sniff or smell suspect mail.
- If you do not have a container, then cover the envelope or package with anything available (e.g., clothing, paper, trash can, etc.) and do not remove the cover.

- Leave the room and close the door, or section off the area to prevent others from entering.
- Wash your hands with soap and water to prevent spreading any powder to your face.
- If you are at work, report the incident to your building security official or an available supervisor, who should notify police and other authorities without delay.
- List all people who were in the room or area when this suspicious letter or package was recognized. Give a copy of this list to both the local public health authorities and law enforcement officials for follow-up investigations and advice.
- Notify emergency service providers

Why Target a School?

Michael Dorn (2002) explains in his article *Terrorism and Schools*, that there are three reasons for a school to be viewed as a potential terrorist target. "(1) they are soft targets; (2) school violence incidents garner considerable media attention; (3) acts of terrorism in schools grip parents with fear for their children's safety, causing significant reactions across the country" (p.19).

Kenneth Trump (2002) in his article *The Impact of Terrorism on School Safety Planning*, talks about terrorists' targets and goals. Goals are listed as:

- To attack a symbolic target that represents their opponents and or something significant to their opponents
- Send a strong message far beyond their actual target of violence
- Alter the ways people live their lives
- Install a lack of confidence in the government

He goes on to discuss that America must "accept the possibility that our schools could also be targets of terrorist attacks" (p. 22). We need to include schools on the list of potential targets.

Background

Bayview High School is an urban high school grades 9 -12 with a population of 2400 students. In order to meet the needs of students and staff there are five administrators, one

principal and four assistant principals. This year Bayview High School has a new principal. He came to Bayview with four years experience as a local middle school assistant principal. As part of starting off on the right foot, Mr. McCormick arranged for pre-service training of the entire school staff on crisis preparedness. The National Security Level continued to fluctuate between High (orange) and Elevated (yellow) due to continued tensions in the Middle East, so Mr. McCormick felt the training appropriate.

The training included a presentation by the Bayview County Sheriff in conjunction with the Bayview County School District on "Crisis Response in Schools." Following the presentation the staff reviewed the Bayview High School Crisis Management Plan including responsibilities, duties and procedures. Areas reviewed included: weather conditions, lockdown, bomb threats, fire, trespassers, weapons, accidents (vehicle, personnel, hazardous material), hostage situations and dealing with out of control students, parents and staff.
After the training there was a debriefing with the staff over lunch. The general consensus was a feeling of preparedness. The staff felt comfortable with their knowledge, they would have practice drills and they had that quick reference flip chart hanging in every classroom.

Case Study Scenario

Saiid was an eleventh grader at Bayview High School. His middle-eastern ethnicity was evident, not just by his name, but also by his physical appearance. He and his family had moved to the United States from Bahrain three years ago. He had a few friends at the school and was generally a quiet, but well-mannered student. With the increased global tensions focused on the threat of terrorism from the Middle East against the United States, some students began to view Saiid with some suspicion. Rumors began to develop that Saiid had relatives that were terrorists and that he was a threat. For

some time Saiid had ignored the rumors, keeping them to himself. At one point a teacher broke up a verbal exchange between Saiid and a student that had called him a terrorist. No further action was taken. Gradually, Saiid's friends began to distance themselves from him.

A small group of students began to target Saiid, calling him names, starting rumors intentionally, and bullying him. Teachers occasionally reprimanded these students, but rarely followed up with discipline action. Twice he was asked by teachers to empty the contents of his locker so that they could inspect it. On Tuesday afternoon after the second locker inspection, Saiid's father came to the school furious about the treatment of his son. After an intense conversation with administrators he left. While leaving he was over heard saying, "My son and family will not sit by and tolerate such bigotry!" This statement was reported to the principal and SRO by students and teachers.

Things seemed to settle down over the next few days. On Friday students came to school as usual and went to their lockers before going to class. At approximately 7:20a.m. a teacher on hall duty witnessed a student opening his locker and seeing a folded piece of paper falling out of the locker and spilling a white powder on the student and surrounding area. Four other students experienced the same situation. The teacher reacted quickly by clearing the area and telling another teacher to call the main office on a classroom phone. Within minutes administrators were at the scene and began hearing reports of the other related incidents. The principal then contacted the district office and immediately made an announcement that all students and staff were to keep their lockers closed, leave everything, and report to their fire drill stations outside.

The commotion of the morning routine with the continuing arrival of students to created a chaotic situation. The principal decided that the best procedure was to treat the situation like a fire drill and to trigger the alarm. Two administrators were positioned at the main entry points of the school to channel the arriving students around the outside of the main campus, while two administrators and non-teaching personnel moved through the campus to try to get students away from their lockers and moving to their stations.

The principal used his radio to contact members of the school crisis management team. He made sure that everyone knew what to do and reviewed assignments and responsibilities including dealing with media personnel, parents, community, and internal communication with the staff. The school team began to regain organization and control; the District Crisis Management Team arrived and began assisting with the management of the situation.

The firemen arrived in response to the alarm. The principal met them and explained that he feared there was anthrax in student lockers and on school grounds. The students that had been exposed were isolated and taken to the hospital. Students who had witnessed the event were talking and rumors spread rapidly about the substance. Other students called parents on their cell phones and before long parents began arriving at the school.

When police arrived the principal explained the situation, stating that he suspected it was Saiid who had placed the substance in the lockers. Saiid was then quickly pulled aside and questioned by the officers.

Despite the best efforts of Bayview High School and the district spokesperson the story hit the news across the country. It was being referred to as an "anthrax attack" with

possible terrorist origins. Over the course of the day the situation came under greater control and tests revealed the white powder was in fact baking powder and not anthrax. Several days later an investigation found that Saiid was not responsible. It was a hoax carried out by another student in hopes of creating a scene and proving true the rumors about Saiid.

A school and district review team found that there were several problems with the response to the situation according to Florida Emergency Planning Standards. They found that while emergency management procedures did exist, the principal had a difficult time determining which procedures to use given the unique time and nature of the situation.

In years past the potential threat to schools could be clearly defined and addressed. Further, most drills took place during class time when the school environment was relatively orderly. Transition time is chaotic under normal circumstance and no one ever practices a drill during transitions. Life has changed. There is a significantly greater variety of crises that could affect the school environment. It is difficult to prepare for such a wide range of contingencies with specific individual plans.

Areas Identified as Problematic or out of Compliance with Procedures

Of equal, or even greater, concern is the fact that the standard of providing a supportive climate for diversity and the prevention of bullying was not upheld. In this case that deficiency led directly to a direr school-wide crisis.

Sherry Colb (2001) writing for FindLaw's Writ, states in her article *The New Face of Racial Profiling*, "It is unfair, in other words, to visit disproportionate burdens upon one

segment of the population, defined by its racial characteristic. In part, this is because race is immutable and therefore cannot be altered to avoid unwanted disparate treatment"(para. 11). Colb further discusses the issues of profiling. She includes the above statement that "race is immutable" and continues with the negative impact of profiling. Profiling denies equal protection under the law. Profiling is an invasion of privacy and yields more negative than positive results.

Racial profiling regarding terrorism as opposed to "driving while black (DWB)" involves the fact that "terrorism is inherently violent and intolerable." Many people who oppose racial profiling may "embrace it" if the case is made for a "compelling government interest" to protect the citizens of the United States. How quickly we forget our past mistakes and lessons learned, 1941 Internment of Japanese Americans.

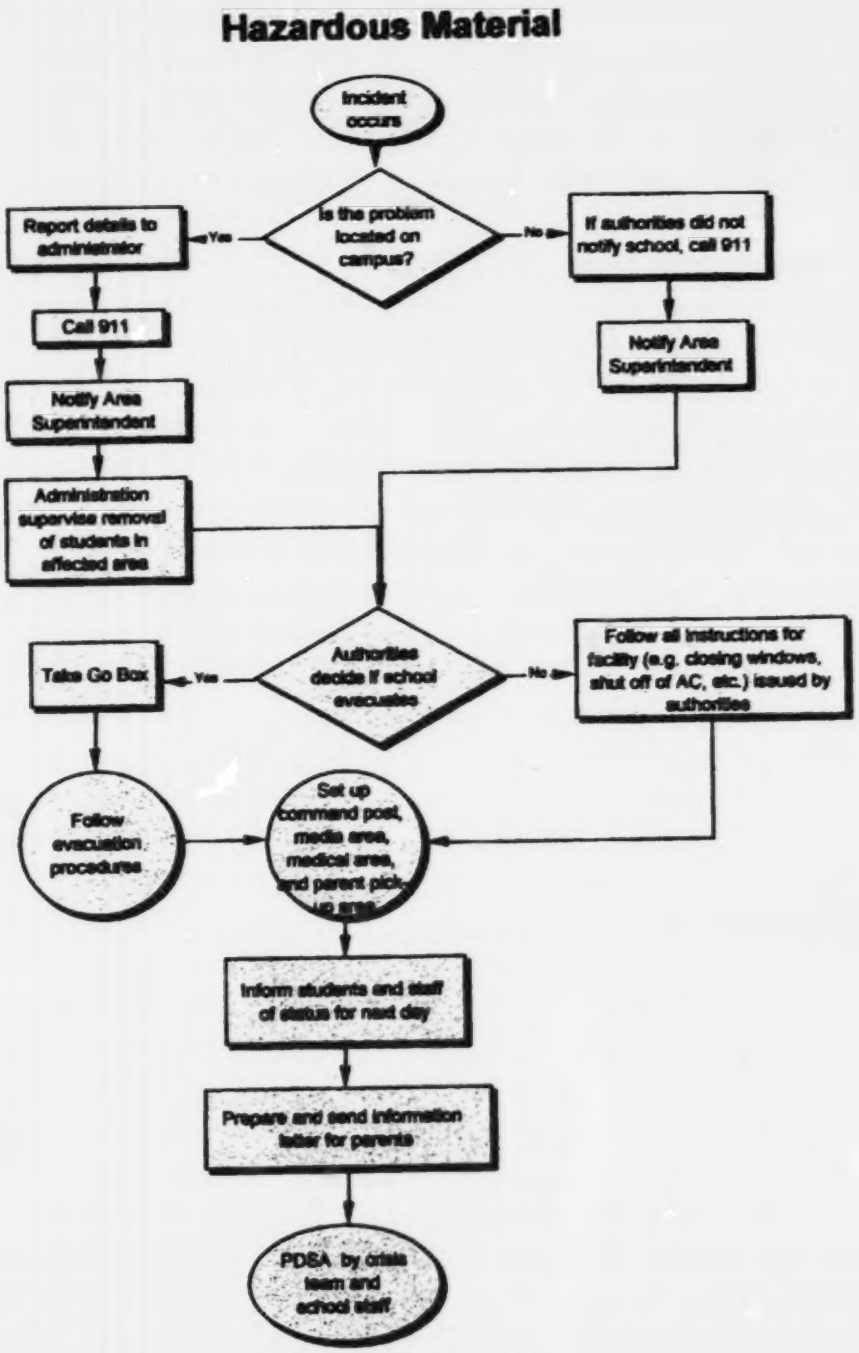
During the 107th Congress a bill was presented before both the house and the senate to eliminate racial profiling. This bill was titled, "Racial Profiling Education and Awareness Act of 2002. Key statements were communicated through this work. One such statement established that, "Using race, ethnicity, or national origin as a proxy for criminal suspicion violates the constitutional requirement that police and other government officials accord to all citizens the equal protection of the law" (para. 3). Although laws have been developed to eliminate racial profiling, this act of prejudice is still an ever-present part of society as evidenced in this case study.

Saiid was a victim in an environment that should have been inclusive. The definition of a victim is any child who has directly or indirectly suffered as the result of isolated or repeated confrontations or personal violations by another child. Primary victims suffer the physical and affective consequences of direct assaults. Secondary

victims experience indirect affective reactions as a result of witnessing or hearing about a victimization incident (NASP, 1999).

Today's educational environment is more diverse than perhaps any other time in history. For that reason it is vital that issues related to multiculturalism be addressed as an educational community. Hoover and Oliver (1996) stated that, "Schools must become cohesive, integrated, family-like villages in which each student has a place, and a sense of mutuality and regard is inculcated along with literacy and numeracy. Until this occurs, all efforts to reduce violence, including bullying, will at best, be stopgap measures" (*Bullying Prevention Handbook*, p. 93).

Table 1. Procedures that should be followed when the presence of hazardous materials creates a crisis (Pinellas County Schools, 2001b).


Hazardous Material
Incident occurs
Is the problem located on campus?
Yes
No
Report details to administrator
Call 911
Notify Area Superintendent
If authorities did not notify school, call 911
Notify Area Superintendent
Administration supervise removal of students in affected area
Authorities decide if school evacuates
Yes
No
Take Go Box
Follow all instructions for facility (e.g. closing windows, shut off of AC, etc.) issued by authorities
Follow evacuation procedures
Set up command post, media area, medical area, and parent pick-up area
Inform students and staff of status for next day
Prepare and send information letter for parents
PDSA by crisis team and school staff

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Of paramount importance in an educational setting is looking after the health, safety and welfare of students. In order to provide a climate that supports diversity, faculty and staff must be aware of early signs of victimization and take action. The school culture must reflect a daily consciousness and preparedness for extreme circumstances. If the school chooses to neglect either of these, they are putting the school family in harms way. By preparing for the unexpected crisis and providing routine practice of potential crisis scenarios, students and staff will develop confidence in their ability to respond appropriately and effectively in a crisis situation. Being prepared is the best defense, and this includes having abroad understanding of racial and cultural diversity. Only when we are knowledgeable and compassionate in our schools will we begin to create an inclusive global culture.

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Susan J Bouleris	Susan Bouleris, First author	
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